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SENSITIVE
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DRL/MLGA FOR KRISTEN MCGEENY, EUR/NB FOR MIGUEL RODRIGUES

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [UN](#) [FI](#)

SUBJECT: FINLAND: RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR
INITIATIVES TO COUNTER TORTURE

REF: STATE 070129

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 20, PolOff and PolAsst met with Dr. Pekka Tuomola, Director of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute Centre for Torture Survivors in Finland. The Centre for Torture Survivors provides a unique holistic approach to therapy, offering a range of treatments from psychological trauma to art therapy. Interpreters are also provided to better understand victim's cultural norms. The center is 100 per cent funded by Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY) through 2010 and provides one of the only resources in Finland for victims of torture. End summary.

¶2. (U) On July 20, PolOff and PolAsst met with Dr. Pekka Tuomola of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute Centre for Torture Survivors in Finland. The apolitical and nonsectarian Centre for Torture Survivors began operations in 1993 as a way for the Government of Finland (GoF) to fulfill international refugee and asylum conventions to treat torture survivors.

Center's Treatment Includes Art Therapy and Group Meetings

¶3. (SBU) The center provides a unique comprehensive and holistic approach to therapy. Torture victims have multiple symptoms requiring a variety of specialists. The center offers psychiatric trauma therapy, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, art therapy, pain treatment, neurological assessment, and family and group meetings. The center's professional staff consists of two psychiatrists, a neurologist, two psychologists, a psychiatric nurse, a physiotherapist and an art therapist. A child psychiatrist also works at the center one day a week treating young adults; no children are treated at the center.

Interpreters Help Overcome Cultural Challenges

¶4. (SBU) Torture victims may be referred by nurses, physicians and social workers in the immigration reception centers or by municipal refugee or health care authorities. Each patient undergoes an extensive initial evaluation to determine the extent of torture, which is often a combination of physical, mental and sexual torture. Patients come from over 30 countries with most coming from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Note: Tuomola specifically noted that Somalis do not come to the center and prefer to treat "themselves." End note.) The center provides interpreters for translation but also to better understand a victim's cultural roots and norms. Tuomola stressed that an interpreter who understands and is apart from regional and tribal differences can be key to successful treatment.

¶5. (U) Tuomola said that the treatment period can vary from months to years. Torture victims come to the center plagued

by trust issues and may view treatment as a continuation of torture, thereby delaying recovery. Treatment is free of charge to the patients. RAY currently provides 100 per cent of the funding and will do so through 2010.

¶6. (SBU) The center, which treats approximately 140 patients a year, is vital to victim's rehabilitation. Finnish psychiatric centers, for example, do not accept torture patients as they are difficult to treat. A smaller similar center for torture survivors operates in Oulu under the Oulu Deaconess Institute.

BUTLER